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THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES.¹

AMONG minor English poets, there is no more striking figure than Thomas Lovell Beddoes, a man of unique personality and versatile talents. Between 1821-26, the five years of mediocrity which followed the deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron, and preceded the outburst of song in the Victorian Era, it is claimed by Mr. Edmund Gosse that "Beddoes was the most interesting talent engaged in writing English verse." It was during these years of exhaustion that he produced his best poems; in later life he ceased to write except as a pastime. Mr. Gosse points out, furthermore, that the effect of writing at such a period "dwarfed, restrained, and finally quenched Beddoes's poetical faculty." He is a striking example of a poet who, at first glance, appears akin to his age in point of time only, and apparently utterly dissimilar in spirit and intellect, a curious instance of the effect of heredity, enhanced by circumstances and study. Beddoes was, moreover, heir to a sufficient patrimony to preclude the necessity of a systematic pursuit of one profession; it is the oft-repeated story of a man possessing very rare gifts, but so undisciplined by nature that he obeyed no law except his own whims. Had he followed his first inclination toward literature, or his later bent toward science, in either domain he might have gained a lasting name; but he was in turn littérateur, scientist, philosopher, politician; as he calls himself, "a moderate dabbler in many waters," squandering his mental gifts in order to satisfy an insatiable greed for knowledge of many things. Beddoes's poetical genius was not sufficient to impel spontaneous song, and the reason of his desultory efforts at verse-making is a

¹ BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- POETICAL WORKS OF THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES. Edited, with a memoir, by Edmund Gosse. London. 1890.
Fortnightly Magazine, Vol. XVIII., p. 51, July, 1872.
Blackwood's Magazine, Vol. XIV., p. 723, 1823.
Living Age, Vol. XXXI., p. 312, November, 1851.

small body of poems, narrow in range, but often exquisite in lyrical beauty and technical perfection.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes was born in Rodney Place, Clifton, on the 20th of July, 1803. He was the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Beddoes and Anna Edgeworth, the sister of Maria Edgeworth, the novelist. Dr. Beddoes was a man of vigorous intellect and talent, eminent both as a physician and as an author. His writings include several scientific treatises, a poem on "The Conquests of Alexander," a moral tale called "Isaac Jenkins," a work on Calculus, and a number of political brochures. The son inherited his father's creative faculty, his love of science, and his distaste for all established conventions. With strange fatality, he seems also to have inherited his father's lack of sustained effort in one direction. Beddoes realized this defect in his own nature; he writes from Hamburg in July, 1825: "What my intentions further may be I cannot say precisely, as I am not altogether endowed with the polar virtue of perseverance, and the needle with which I embroidered my cloth of life has not been rubbed with the magnet of steady determination."

At the time of Dr. Beddoes's death, in 1809, his son was intrusted to the guardianship of Sir Davies Gilbert, P.R.S. The young boy was first sent to Bath Grammar School, later to the Charterhouse. A minute description of Beddoes's personal appearance and characteristics at this period of his life, given by his schoolfellow and fag, Mr. C. D. Bevan, is quoted by Thomas Kelsall in the *Fortnightly* of July, 1872. He is described as "a youth with a shrewd, sarcastic face, of great humor, with propensity to mischief, and impatient of authority." In later life Beddoes is said to have looked like Keats. Among the various incidents of Beddoes's school-days, related by Mr. Bevan, there is one that occurred when he was only fourteen, which shows both the precocity of the youth and the grim humor which so characterized his later life. A locksmith connected with the school had placed an inferior lock on Beddoes's bookcase, and had demanded an exorbitant price. In revenge, Beddoes wrote a burlesque, in which he represented the death of the locksmith, "dis-

turbed by horror and remorse for his sins in the matter of the lock," and the funeral procession, interrupted by fiends who bore the soul of the transgressor to eternal torment. This farce was acted by Beddoes in the presence of the smith so realistically that the latter was overcome by terror. Mr. Bevan says that Beddoes was not a good student of the classics, but was at a very early age familiar with English literature, especially dramatic poetry. He was not popular among his schoolfellows, and yet he enjoyed a supremacy over them, due both to fear and to respect.

In 1820 Beddoes entered Pembroke College, Oxford, and in 1825 received the degree of A.B. He did not distinguish himself in college, but seemed quite content with mediocrity, submitting himself to no law or system of study. During his residence at Pembroke he formed a friendship with Thomas Kelsall, a lawyer, who remained his most constant friend throughout his life, and became his literary executor after his death. It is due to Mr. Kelsall primarily that the poet is known to the public.

After receiving the degree of A.B., Beddoes turned to the study of the German language and literature, "leaning to ultra-liberty and rationalism," with a hatred of old-time customs and institutions. This love of German thought and feeling led him, in 1825, to visit Germany. Here he spent the following four years, studying physics and philosophy, at the University of Göttingen. He writes from Göttingen that he was "never better employed, never so happy, never so well satisfied"—a great improvement on the melancholy mood to which he had been prey in the previous year. A letter from London, March 29, 1824, says: "The truth is, that being a little shy and not a little proud perhaps, I have held back and never made the first step toward discovering my residence or existence to any of my family friends; in consequence I have lived in a deserted state that I could hardly bear much longer without sinking into that despondency on the brink of which I have sate so long." It is almost certain that at a very early age Beddoes had been separated from his family, and from the beginning of his college course his letters

show little trace of intercourse with his mother or sisters. The bibliography is so limited that it is impossible to judge with any degree of accuracy whether this estrangement grew from indifference on Beddoes's part, from a positive breach, or from his habitual dislike to companionship. His loneliness is shown in a letter dated Göttingen, Dec. 4th, 1825, to Mr. Kelsall: "I feel myself in a measure alone in the world and likely to remain so, for from the experiments I have made I fear I am a nonconductor of friendship, a not-very-likable person, so that I must make sure of my own respect and occupy that part of the brain which should be employed in imaginative attachments, in the pursuit of immaterial and unchanging good."

At the University of Göttingen Prof. Blumenbach, the first great German geologist, was one of his instructors, and in speaking of Beddoes said that "his talent exceeded that of any other student who received instruction from me during my professorship." Prof. Blumenbach's professorship covered a period of more than fifty years, so that these words indicate that Beddoes must have been an unusually promising student.

Beddoes returned to England in the spring of 1828, to receive his degree of A.M., remaining only a short time." Of this visit he writes, in a letter to Mr. Kelsall from Clifton, that he does not expect to spend more than two days in London, for "nothing can equal my impatience and weariness of this dull, idle, pampered isle." Already he had become infatuated with German thought and learning, and preferred the country of his adoption to his native land. In 1829 or 1830, he went to Würzburg, and there, in 1832, he received the degree of M.D. He was offered the professorship of Comparative Anatomy at the University of Zurich in 1835; but this offer was afterwards withdrawn, since he had published no scientific treatise. In a letter written about this time he states that he had no desire to write the required thesis. Beddoes seems to have toiled unceasingly in the pursuit of knowledge, not for professional distinction or financial gain, but for the personal satisfaction and pleasure which he derived from the mere acquisition. His innate scholarly instinct was fostered by

German university life until his meditative faculty almost entirely absorbed his creative powers.

After his arrival in Würzburg, he began to sympathize with the revolutionary tendencies and democratic movement in Switzerland, aiding with his "pen and purse," until his residence there became endangered, and he was forced to flee. He took refuge in Strasburg in 1832, then in Zurich in 1833, where he remained seven years, probably the happiest of his life.

After 1825, Beddoes's intercourse with his friends in England almost ceased. His love of solitude and aversion for companionship increased to such an extent that he was misanthropic, and probably mildly insane. His complete adoption of Germany and Switzerland as his home had further estranged him in thought and feeling from England. In August, 1846, he spent ten months in England, and his friends scarcely recognized him. He was "rough and cynical in speech, and eccentric in manners." Six out of the ten months he refused to see any one. Mr. Gosse quotes Mrs. Proctor as having said that "his eccentricities at this time gave the appearance of insanity, but closer observation showed them to be the result of a peculiar fancy, unaccustomed to restraint."¹ However, in an unsigned article published in the "Athenæum" of December 27, 1890, Mrs. Proctor is reported to have said that she considered Beddoes insane at this time.

In 1848 Beddoes writes that he has decided to return to England permanently, but he became poisoned by the virus from a dead body before he was able to carry out his intention, and the ensuing illness prevented his return. His long illness greatly depressed him. In July of the same year he attempted suicide by severing an artery in his leg with a razor. His purpose was defeated, but during his recovery he stealthily and systematically removed the bandages until it became necessary to amputate the leg. In December Beddoes was able to leave his room, and it was thought that he

¹ Poetical works of T. L. Beddoes, ed. 1890, V., Introduction, p. 31.

had given up all intention of suicide, but the first time he went into the town he obtained a poison called Kurara, and that evening was found unconscious. He died at ten o'clock the same night, January 26, 1849, and was buried at Basel. Beddoes left a memorandum, bequeathing his manuscripts to Mr. Kelsall, to be disposed of as Mr. Kelsall thought best, and he also left a most extraordinary note to a friend, in which he said, "Life was too great a bore on one peg and that a bad one." An attendant afterwards said: "*Il était misérable; il a voulu [sic] se tuer.*" These are the only reasons known for his suicide; there is no evidence of any disappointment or great sorrow. Probably it was the effect of monomania, due to long solitude. Death, over which he had brooded for years, with an irresistible, fascinating influence sucked him into its vortex, whose depth and mystery he had contemplated for so long a time.

During his lifetime, with the exception of a few poems which had appeared in current periodicals, Beddoes published only two volumes. One of these, "The Improvisatore" published at Oxford in 1821, was almost completely destroyed by him, so that only five or six copies are now in existence. The second volume was "The Bride's Tragedy," published by the Rivingtons in 1822. At the time of his death, in 1849, the bulk of manuscript was still unpublished, and it was not until 1850, when Mr. Kelsall edited "Death's Jest Book," that any of Beddoes's more mature work was given to the public. In 1850 Mr. Kelsall published some of the remaining poems and fragments, with a memoir of the poet, under the title, "Poems by the late Thomas L. Beddoes." At Mr. Kelsall's death, in 1869 (?), he bequeathed the manuscript to Mr. Robert Browning, who admired Beddoes extravagantly. Mr. Browning had attempted to dissuade Mr. Kelsall from this intention, because of a superstitious fear he cherished toward the box containing the manuscript, but Mr. Kelsall persisted in his intention; Mr. Browning did not examine the manuscript for years, fearing that it would disclose some gruesome secret. When, after a lapse of years, he went through the papers with the assistance of Mr. Gosse, his presentiment was verified,

for the fact of the suicide came to light, which hitherto had not been known.

In 1890, Mr. Gosse published, under the title "Poetical Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes," an excellent edition, in which he has made the best of the fragments. It was a matter of much surprise that no scientific works of any kind were found among Beddoes's manuscripts, for the trend of his mind from 1826 had been almost entirely in a scientific direction, and his letters make constant reference to scientific writings or translations then in progress. In April, 1827, he writes: "My next publication will probably be a dissertation on Organic Expansion." From Zurich, in 1838, he writes that he is employed in translating into German Mr. Grainger's work on the Spinal Cord. No trace of these two scientific works, or of the various publications which Beddoes is known to have made while in Germany, has ever been found.

It is when one takes up Beddoes's productions in detail that one marvels most at his originality and early signs of talent. His first attempt, written while at the Charterhouse, was a novel called "Cynthio and Bugboo," now lost. Mr. Bevan says that it was modeled on a work of Fielding's, and had "all the coarseness, little of the wit, and none of the truth of the original."

Beddoes's second poem (as far as it has been possible to ascertain) was "Alfarabi," written about 1819, at all events before he went to Oxford. From every standpoint it is a most remarkable production for a boy of sixteen. Mr. Gosse says that this "rhapsody displays a very singular adroitness in the manufacture of easy blank verse, and precocious tendency to a species of mocking metaphysics." A few lines are of real beauty, and the poem as a whole shows an unusual appreciation of Nature and a rare discrimination in word shades:

One snow-winged cloud,
To wander slowly down the trembling blue;
A wind that stops and pants along the grass,
Trembles and flies again like thing pursued;
And indescribable, delightful sounds,
Which dart along the sky, we know not whence;

Bees we have to hum, shrill-noted swallows
With their small, lightning wings, to fly about
And tilt against the waters.

The poem is a story of a man who seeks to know "the secret and the spell of life," and this motive is the beginning of the thread of thought which can be traced throughout all of Beddoes's writings and studies—the desire to solve the mystery of life and death. There is much doggerel in the poem, but as a whole it gives high promise of things to come. Curiously enough, it contains nearly all the traits of his later writings, wonderful imaginative faculty, delicate fancy, and a love of the ghastly picturesque. The last-named quality is easily recognized:

As he who stalks by night,
With the ghost's step, the shaggy murderer
Leaves passed the dreamy city's sickly lamps.
Then through the torrid twilight did they plunge
The universe's suburb; dwelling dim
Of all that sin and suffer; midnight shrieks
Upon the water, when no help is near;
The blood-choked curse of him who dies in bed
By torchlight, with a dagger in his heart;
The parricidal and incestuous laugh;
And the last cries of those whom devils hale
Quick into hell.

The most interesting fact in connection with this poem is the unmistakable influence of Milton, both in the choice of polysyllabic words and in the free use of the cæsure; a few lines (possibly sixty) have the full echo of the majestic swing and cadence of Milton's blank verse. Compare these lines with passages from the first book of Milton's "Paradise Lost:"

It was within a space
Upon the very boundary and brim
Of the whole universe, the outer edge
Which seemed almost to end the infinite zone;
A chasm in the Almighty thoughts, forgotten
By the Omnipotent, a place apart
Like some great ruinous dream of broken worlds
Trembling through heaven, or Tartarus' panting jaws
Open above the sun. Sky there was none,
Nor earth, nor water; but confusion strange
Of bursted worlds, and brazen pinions vast

Of planets shipwrecked; many a wrinkled sun
 Ate to the core by worms, with lightnings crushed;
 And drossy bolts, melting like noonday snow.
 Old towers of heaven were there, and fragments bright
 Of the cerulean battlements o'erthrown
 When the gods struggled for the throne of light.

Beddoes's next production, "The Improvisatore," published in 1821 at Oxford by J. Vincent, and in London by Whittaker, was written before Beddoes was eighteen. The poem is written in three fyttes, with an introduction to each. The introduction in each case furnishes the motive for the song which follows. While the verse is not without defect, it shows metrical skill and sense of melody. The tone of the whole poem is morbid. The descriptions of feminine beauty show remarkable powers of observation in one so young, as where in the first fytte he describes Emily:

Those eyes were of a beauteous melting blue,
 Like a dark violet bathed in quivering dew;
 Her mouth seemed formed for signs of sportive guile
 And youthful kisses; and there played a smile
 About her lips, like an inconstant moth
 Around a flower, now settling, and now flown
 Into every passing breath, as though 'twere loth
 To stay and make the resting place its own.

Beddoes depicts Nature in her serener aspects with as much sane ease as he describes her in sterner moods; and with equal facility he describes dainty details of feminine beauty and flowers, or the horrible features of a charnel-house and great battlefield. Stanza xi. of the first fytte, and stanzas i., iv., v., vii. of the second fytte, illustrate this descriptive ability. The third fytte, "Leopold," surpasses both of these in repulsive, realistic details, and in the use of the supernatural element.

While Beddoes's scientific studies probably increased his tendency to dwell on gruesome subjects, and his natural tendency to gloom was aggravated by long association with Death, yet "The Improvisatore," written before he began scientific investigation, proves beyond a doubt that these qualities were innate. Note the description of the battlefield in "Leopold:"

The dead are all reeking, a ghastly heap
Slippery with gore, and with crushed bones steep;
As if the flesh had been snowed on the hills,
And dribbled away in blood-clammy rills,
A swamp of distorted faces it lay
And sweltered and throbbed in the broad day.
There was one who had fainted in battle's crash;
Now he struggled in vain with feeble splash
Under his warm tomb of motionless dead;
At last he dashed backward his bursting head,
And gasped in his hideous agony,
And ground his firm teeth, and darted his eyes;
Then wriggled his lips in the last prayer of death,
And mixed with the whirlwind his foamed breath.

In marked contrast to such horrible pictures, the pastoral love scenes in "Albert and Emily," and the lyric songs in "Rudolph," are very refreshing. Beddoes strikes a reflective note in the poem, unusual with him:

What is this life, that spins so strangely on
That, ere we grasp and feel it, it is gone?
Is it a vision? Are we sleeping now
In the sweet sunshine of another world?

The last stanza of "Leopold," where doom is represented as advancing, is quite dramatic. "Leopold" might be interpreted as an allegory of sin and its growth, with its attendant evils. The poem, though crude and immature in many respects, gives great promise of things to come, a promise, unfortunately, never fulfilled.

"The Bride's Tragedy" was published by the Rivingtons in 1822, and, while rare in this edition, is not so scarce as "The Improvisatore" in the edition of 1821. A second edition was published in 1851, and it appeared for the third time in the Gosse edition of 1890. Beddoes began "The Bride's Tragedy" during his first year at Oxford, and completed it in his second year, before he was nineteen. It attracted much contemporary criticism, notably an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* in December, 1823, Vol. 14, p. 723, in which the play is dubbed "as silly as might be—trifling to a degree that is quite refreshing," but promising. The drama attracted the attention of Bryan Waller Proctor, who gave the young poet great encouragement and became his lasting friend. In

1827 Beddoes writes: "I assure you that the approbation which you have pleased to bestow upon a very sad boyish affair, that 'Bride's Tragedy,' which I now would not even be condemned to read through for any consideration, appears to me a remarkable solecism of your otherwise sound literary judgment."

Beddoes discovered his plot for the drama among the forgotten legends of Oxford. A student, having married in secret the daughter of a manciple of one of the colleges, becomes entangled during the following vacation in a betrothal *de convenance* arranged by his father. Eventually the student falls in love with his betrothed, and desires the death of his bride. He is weak, and the desire soon becomes a design to murder her. The unsuspecting wife is enticed to a lonely retreat, murdered, and buried in the Divinity Walk. In the legend, the crime remains undiscovered until the murderer confesses it on his deathbed, but Beddoes has altered this to suit his purpose, and Nemesis follows, swift and sure.

The drama is written in easy blank verse. The first act opens with a graceful love scene between Hesperus and his bride, Floribel, in striking contrast to the dark scenes of guilt and crime which follow. There are many passages, such as the following, marked with delicate, ethereal fancy and Elizabethan conceits:

In Elfin annals old
 'Tis writ how Zephyr, envious of his love
 (The love he bare to Summer, who, since then
 Has, weeping, visited the world), once found
 The baby Perfume, cradled in a violet;
 ('Twas said the beauteous bantling was the child
 Of a gay bee that in his wantonness
 Toyed with a pea bud in a lady's garland;)
 The felon winds, confederate with him,
 Bound the sweet slumberer with golden chains,
 Pulled from the wreathed laburnum, and together
 Deep cast him in the bosom of a rose,
 And fed the fettered wretch with dew and air.
 At length his soul, that was a lover's sigh,
 Issued from his body, and the guilty blossom
 His heart's blood stained. The twilight-haunting gnat

His requiem whined, and harebells tolled his knell;
And still the bee, in pied velvet dight,
With melancholy song from flower to flower
Goes seeking his lost offspring.

The long monologue of Floribel is marked with the same dainty imagery and delightful fancy. Act I., Scene 3, between Hesperus and his father, Lord Ernest, is the most powerful part of the tragedy, with the exception of the murder. The love scene between Hesperus and Olivia, his betrothed, is in a more serious vein than the scene between Hesperus and Floribel, and contains greater passion and strength. The first is all innocence, but the second is darkened by the shadow of guilt and crime. The speech of Olivia contains more power than any of Floribel's:

But what's to be without my Hesperus?
A life of dying. 'Tis to die each moment
In every several sense. To look despair,
Feel, taste, breathe, eat, be conscious of despair.
No, I'll be nothing rather.

Hesperus is weak, evil, treacherous, yet sometimes moved by good impulses. His character stands out in bold relief to that of Floribel—gentle, affectionate, innocent, yet strong in her love. When Hesperus determines upon her death, he says:

I would not have thee cross my path to-night.
There is an indistinct, dread purpose forming,
Something whose depth of wickedness appears
Hideous, incalculable, but inevitable.
Now it draws nearer, and I do not shudder.
Avaunt! haunt me no more. I dread it not,
But almost—hence! I must not be alone.

And again, of his shadow:

I know thee now—
'Tis Malice's eldest imp, the heir of hell,
Red-handed Murther. Slow it whispers me
Coaxingly with its serpent voice. Well sung,
Syren of Acheron.

It is interesting to compare the monologue of Hesperus before murdering Floribel with that of Macbeth before murdering Duncan. The personifications, epithets, and spirit of the two have a striking resemblance. When Hesperus

tells Floribel that she must die, her reply is full of resignation and pathos:

O, if thou will'st it, love,
If thou but speak it in thy natural voice
And smile upon me, I'll not think it pain,
But cheerfully I'll seek me out a grave
And sleep as sweetly as on Hesperus' breast.

Hesperus murders her, and, repenting almost instantly, he kisses her, and exclaims:

What a shriek was that! It flew to heaven,
And hymning angels took it for their own.

The murder scene, Act III., Scene 3, is very dramatic, as are the majority of the passages dealing with sin and crime. Beddoes strikes the chord of the darker passions with an almost master hand.

The plot of the drama is fit material for high tragedy, and Beddoes has handled it well. It is the only one of his dramas that has a central motive, and the only one possessing organic unity. Had Beddoes fulfilled with increasing years the promise that his play gave, he would have been a great dramatist, but instead he seems to have retrograded. "Death's Jest Book," the work of his maturer years, is a more polished production, but it has far less dramatic power, and no unity.

"The Bride's Tragedy," notwithstanding its vagueness of characterization and general haziness, has many good points. The horror of the tragedy and the superabundance of evil motives is relieved by scenes of tenderness and beauty, adorned with luxuriance of fancy. As the production of a youth of eighteen, one marvels at the excellencies and condones the defects. *Blackwood's Magazine* of December, 1823, says: "We sup full of horrors, but there are gay and fantastic garnishings and adornments of the repast, disposed quite in the manner and spirit of the great old masters."

It has been impossible to ascertain the exact chronological order of all the poems; but it is quite certain that "The Second Brother" and "Torrismond" were written between 1823 and 1825, while Beddoes was on a visit to Mr. Kelsall at Southampton. During the winter of 1823, Beddoes also began

"Love's Arrow Poisoned" and "The Last Man," neither of which was ever completed, and are now so fragmentary as to leave little trace of plot. Mr. Gosse states that "already Beddoes was seized with that inability to finish, that lack of organic principle of poetical composition, which were to prevent him from mounting to those heights to which his facility and brilliancy promised him so easy an ascent." In a letter to Mr. Kelsall, August 25, 1824, Beddoes wrote: "I depend very little on my poetical faculty, but it is my intention to complete one more tragedy." In September of the same year he again writes: "I find literary wishes fading very fast;" and in April, 1826, says, "I never could have been the real thing as a writer." This doubting of himself probably increased his natural inability to develop a plot, to evolve a character successfully, or in fact to achieve any desired end.

"The Second Brother" is incomplete, consisting of only three acts and two scenes of the fourth act. It derives its name from the return of the second brother, Marcello, long thought dead, to claim his heritage from the third brother, Orazio, who believes himself the rightful owner in the order of succession to the dukedom. Upon his return in disguise, Marcello's love for Orazio and the indulgence that he might have shown to the usurper are turned to hate and revenge by the cruel treatment that he receives. The accession of Marcello to the dukedom after the overthrow of Orazio is highly dramatic; but here all continuity ceases, for the character of Marcello is too poorly drawn to be able to foresee any satisfaction that he may derive from his revenge, or what the outcome of the whole will be. The characterization of Marcello is similar to the description of him by his servant, Ezriel:

A fathomless and undiscovered man,
Thinking above the eagle's highest wings
And underneath the world.

Act I., Scene 2., between Orazio and the wife whom he has deserted contains many fine passages and shows much human sympathy, a rather unusual element in Beddoes's writings. Orazio's ruin is complete when the father of his deserted

wife buys up all the mortgages on Orazzo's private estate, and drives him from his home. There is a marked resemblance between Valeria, Orazzo's wife, and Floribel, of "The Bride's Tragedy." A splendid passage occurs in a dialogue between Valeria and an attendant:

Do I love? I walk
Within the brilliance of another's thought
As in a glory. I was dark before
As Venus' chapel in the black of night:
Then love came
Like the outbursting of a trodden star,
And what before was hueless and unseen
Now shows me a divinity, like that
Which raised to life out of the snowy rock,
Surpassed mankind's creation, and repaid
Heaven for Pandora.

Valeria appeals to Marcello for mercy:

I have a plea,
As dewy-piteous as the gentle ghost's,
That sits alone upon the forest grave,
Thinking of no revenge. I have a mandate
As magical and as potent as e'er ran
Silently through a battle's myriad veins,
Undid their fingers from the hanging steel,
And drew them up in prayer; I am a woman.

There is an obvious contradiction in the statement that Valeria's body is disfigured from drowning after a very few hours in the water. Here the manuscript stops abruptly, and it is impossible to anticipate the climax. The drama shows no advance over "The Bride's Tragedy," is less promising in the evolution of a coherent plot, and has less lyrical beauty than the other dramas.

"Torrismond" belongs to the same period of production as "The Second Brother," and is still less near completion, consisting of only one act, but that act contains a song which is one of the most famous of Beddoes's lyrical productions. In the fragment we have glimpses of a son indulged excessively, and in turn brooked with fierce restraint by his father. The drinking revel, Scene 2, is good, while the soliloquy of Torrismond, when he finds Veronica asleep, shows considerable descriptive powers. Like the Elizabethans, one phrase

expands into another, until there are explanatory clauses within explanatory clauses. Some of the best passages are these:

This very night we both may die,
Or one at least; and it is very likely
We never meet, or if we meet, not thus;
But somehow kindred by the times, the place,
The persons. There are many chances else,
That, though no bigger than a sunny mote,
Coming between, may our whole future part—
. . . it may sever us
As utterly as if the world should split
Here, as we stand, and all eternity
Push through the earthquake's lips and rise between us.
Then let us know each other's constancy;
Thou in my mind, and I in thine shall be;
And so disseparable to the edge
Of thinnest lightning.

As a final pledge, Veronica answers:

As I believe thee steadfast and sincere;
And if it be not so, God pity me!
I love thee purely, dearly, heartily.
So witness heaven and our own silent spirits.

To which Torrismond replies:

And by my immortality, I swear
With the like honesty, the like to thee.

Gaudentio, interfering between the angry father and his son, says to the father:

There stands before you
The youth and golden top of your existence,
Another life of yours; for think your morning
Not lost, but given, passed from your hand to his.

And, speaking of the father to the son, he says:

Remember there's a kind of God in him,
And after him, the next of thy religion.

Gaudentio fails to reconcile them, and Torrismond says in his despair:

How many things, sir, do men live to do?
The mighty labor is to die; we'll do it,
But we'll drive in a chariot to our graves,
Wheeled with big thunder o'er the heads of men.

Of Act II. there is only one line, and the manuscript ends abruptly.

"The Last Man," of which Beddoes, in February, 1824, wrote: "Proctor has the brass to tell me he likes that fool, 'The Last Man.'" The play has no trace of a plot; but Mr. Gosse has pieced together scattered fragments which were evidently intended to form parts of a five-act tragedy. In another letter Beddoes says of "The Last Man:" "There are three first acts in my drama; when I have got two more, I shall stick them together, and stick the sign of a fellow tweedling a mask in his fingers, with 'good entertainment for man and ass' understood." These three acts were lost or destroyed, for no trace of them exists. In 1827 he writes from Göttingen that he expects to embody "The Last Man" in "The Jest Book." The only characters mentioned are Dianeme, lamenting the death of her lover, Casimir, and an attendant. The fragment is not so rich in beautiful passages as some of the other dramas, but there are some worthy of note:

Is it not sweet to die? For what is death
But sighing that we ne'er may sigh again,
Getting at length beyond our tedious selves;
But trampling the last tear from poisonous sorrow,
Spilling our woes, crushing our frozen hopes,
And passing like an incense out of man?
Then, if the body felt, what were its sense,
Turning to daisies gently in the grave,
If not the soul's most delicate delight
When it does filtrate through the pores of thought
In love and the enameled flowers of song?

Again:

Yet men die suddenly;
One sits upon a strong and rocky life,
Watching a street of many opulent years,
And Hope's his mason. Well, to-day do this,
And so to-morrow; twenty hollow years
Are stuffed with action. Lo! upon his head
Drops a pin's point of time. Tick! quoth the clock,
And the grave snaps him.

From the dates given in his letters, it would seem that Beddoes had four unfinished plays in progress at one time—the last three discussed, and a fourth, "Love's Arrow Poi-

soned. It is scarcely to be wondered at under these conditions that they were never finished. The fragments of "Love's Arrow Poisoned" show the unmistakable influence of Webster and Tourneur. The raving of Erminia against Nature, and her cruelty in particular, is much like Webster. The whole consists of only four scenes of the first act.

"Death's Jest Book, or the Fool's Tragedy," the best known of Beddoes's writings, was begun at Oxford in 1825, and practically finished in 1826, although he continued to enlarge and alter it until 1844. On the 8th of July, 1825, he wrote Mr. Kelsall from Oxford: "I do not intend to finish that Second Brother that you saw, but am thinking of a very Gothic-styled tragedy, for which I have a jewel of a name—'Death's Jest Book.' Of course no one will ever read it." In December of the same year: "'Death's Jest Book' goes on like the tortoise, slow but sure; I think it will be entertaining, very unamiable, and utterly unpopular." April 1, 1826, he reported the fourth and fifth acts more than half done; "so that at last it will be a perfect mouse, but such doggerel," and added that if it is ever finished it will come "like an electric shock among the smaller critics." From Göttingen in 1826 he wrote that it is "done and done for." In 1844, from Giessen, in a letter to Mr. Kelsall, Beddoes quoted two songs that he had just finished, "The Swallow Leaves Her Nest" and "In Lover's Ear a Wild Voice Cried," and says that "he has stuck them into the endless J. B." This work, the link between his literary life at Oxford and his scientific studies on the Continent, is the one effort of his life to which he adhered with any perseverance. Although Beddoes with great effort completed it, the play is not the result of spontaneous inspiration, but the laborious work of many years, into which he interpolated stray thoughts, fragments of other dramas, and odd lyric songs. The effect is a conglomeration of the various ideas of a lifetime.

Beddoes thought of publishing "Death's Jest Book" in 1828, and again in 1831, but it did not appear until 1850, when Mr. Kelsall published it anonymously. Three texts were found among the manuscripts, the first called "Charonic

Steps." The second is that which Mr. Kelsall adhered to in the main; the third contained only one act. Mr. Gosse, in his edition of 1890, has used Mr. Kelsall's edition.

The contemporary criticism (in 1850) was very flattering. Walter Savage Landor wrote that "Nearly two centuries have elapsed since a work of the same wealth of genius has been given to the world," and John Forster said: "We must frankly say we are not acquainted with any living author who could have written 'The Fool's Tragedy.'" Unfortunately for Beddoes's literary fame, posterity does not seem to have concurred in these flattering estimates, and "Death's Jest Book," the one object to which he was constant, remains obscure. The drama was reviewed anonymously in the *Eclectic Magazine*, Vol. XXIV., p. 446 (the same article appeared in the *Living Age* of November 15, 1851), praising "Death's Jest Book" in the highest terms. Among other things, the writer says: "The merit of 'Death's Jest Book' does not depend on philosophic delineations of the *dramatis personæ* (it is well that it does not, as there is practically no delineation of character) and nice gradations in their development, but the story is powerfully and graphically told." It is probable that Mr. Kelsall wrote the article, since it closely resembles a signed article by him in the *Fortnightly*, July, 1872; and if so, some allowance must be made for his personal feeling for the author, inasmuch as the story is not powerfully unfolded, there is no coherence of action, no continuity of plot, and, above all, no great motion or purpose around which all else centers and depends.

The drama is based on the disputed historical fact that Duke Boleslaus, of Münsterberg, in Silesia, was murdered by his court fool. The scene is Silesia and the time is the thirteenth century. The infant sons of the murdered man are sent into exile. Reaching manhood, they return and seek revenge. One of them, Wolfram, becomes greatly attached to his father's slayer, and discards the idea of revenge; the second, Isbrand, the more revengeful of the two, becomes the court fool. It is evident that Beddoes intended to duplicate the incident of the reigning duke, himself formerly a

court fool, now a murderer and usurper, being in turn murdered by his own court fool, and that Isbrand should be the avenger of his father; but, "like an untrained terrier among members of a quarry," he was diverted hither and thither, and in the end evolved no one thought or plot to a climax. The usurper, Duke Melveric, is taken captive by the Moors, and Scene 1, of Act I., is the departure of Wolfram to rescue him. Isbrand upbraids him brother for his failure to avenge their father, and Isbrand is left to his solitary revenge. After the rescue of the Duke has been effected, he and Melveric become enamored of the same woman, Sibylla, and the ungrateful Duke slays his thrice-rescuer, Wolfram. The first act closes dramatically with the death of Wolfram and with the beautiful lyric:

The swallow leaves her nest,
The soul my weary breast;
But therefore let the rain
On my grave
Fall pure; for why complain,
Since this will come again
O'er the wave?

The wind, dead leaves, and snow
Doth scurry to and fro;
And, once, a day shall break
O'er the wave,
When a storm of ghosts shall shake
The dead until they wake
In the grave.

In meter and cadence this song suggests Shelley, but in etherealness and grace it is not equal to him. The Dirge, at the opening of Act II., Scene 1,

If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,

also shows Shelley's influence upon Beddoes.

In Act I., which is the best part of "Death's Jest Book," many passages show skill and power:

What's this thought,
Shapeless and shadowy, that keeps wheeling round,
Like a dumb creature that sees coming danger
And breaks its heart trying in vain to speak?

I knew the moment; 'tis a dreadful one,
 Which in the life of every one comes once;
 When, for the frightened, hesitating soul,
 High heaven and luring sin with promises
 Bid and contend; oft the faltering spirit,
 O'ercome by the fair, fascinating fiend,
 Gives her eternal heritage of life
 For one caress, for one triumphant crime.

And again:

Many the ways, the little home is one;
 Thither the course leads, thither the helm,
 And at one gate we meet when all is done.

The speech of Isbrand at the close of Scene I, and of Ziba at the end of Scene 2, of the same act, are very indicative of Beddoes's usual trend of thought.

From the beginning of Act II., we are confused by haziness of motive and characterization, by plots and counter-plots, until it is impossible to follow the leading thought that Beddoes would define—each scene seems a part unto itself. The leading motif of Act I.—the Duke's passion for Sibylla, extinguished by remorse—has been abandoned, and a plot against Duke Melveric by Isbrand and the Duke's sons, Adalmar and Athulf, takes its place. This motif is in turn supplanted by Adalmar and Athulf's love for the same woman. The marriage of Adalmar to Amala follows, and Athulf slays Adalmar. The occult element is now introduced, and Zeba, an Arab, raises Wolfram from the dead. He consorts with the living most freely by day and by night without comment from them, and seems to be of substantial flesh. Beddoes manages this part by means of the introduction of a Hebrew legend, for which authority is found in rabbinical literature, that a bone exists in the body, "Aldabaron," called by the Hebrews "Luz," which "withstands dissolution after death," and out of which it is possible to raise the body, and by means of which God will re-create the body at the Resurrection. This bone, according to Mr. Gosse, was the os coccygis, a bone beneath the eighteenth vertebra.

The drama closes with only one thing clear—that Beddoes intended to make as clean sweep of the stage by means of the death of the *dramatis personæ* as Kyd does in his

"Spanish Tragedy" and Death, to whom the drama is dedicated, reigns supreme. The proportions of the supernatural elements of lust for revenge and of Death, are used more than is palatable even in blood-and-thunder tragedy. Even when due allowance is made for the belief in the supernatural that prevailed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is scarcely probable that this drama would have received credence at that time, and the effect on an audience of the present day might be psychologically interesting. Beddoes, in a letter dated February, 1829, says that it should be the typical aim of a dramatist to produce a drama to be *acted*, and that its fitness for this purpose is the most thorough test. It is scarcely to be credited that he thought "Death's Jest Book" practical for presentation on the stage, for his perception of his own shortcomings was ordinarily so keen, it is not likely that he was deceived in this instance. He must therefore have written "Death's Jest Book" solely for his own amusement.

The play as a whole presents a motley mixture; the Macabresque influence of the thirteenth century is seen in the Dance of Death, Act V., Scene 4, where the figures in a painted representation of the Dance of Death in the cathedral cloister come out of the walls and dance. Beddoes probably borrowed this from some old German interpretation of the "Totentanz." The Rosicrucian influence of the fifteenth century is present in the use of the occult, where Wolfram is raised from the dead. Interspersed with these two incongruous elements, and further enhancing the strange effect, is the German metaphysics of the nineteenth century. "Death's Jest Book" seems but the overflow, the excrescence of unassimilated knowledge, and not the natural development of a genius. It is apparent that Beddoes did not improve or develop beyond the "Bride's Tragedy," with the exception of greater perfection of meter and lyric grace. In dramatic power he had declined. Yet the drama is not without interest or merit; the originality, the startling conception, and the beauty of isolated passages make it worth the reading; as a unit, it is a deplorable failure. Mr. Browning said of it: "Now

as to the extracts which might be made, why, you might pick out scenes, passages, lyrics, fine as might be; the power of the man is immense and irresistible." This opinion sums up all of its virtues and seems even a little extravagant in the light of its many defects, but it is certainly, from any view-point, a most remarkable production, on account of the originality of its subject-matter and the great beauty and power of many passages. Beddoes did not erect the "Gothic-styled tragedy," of which he wrote, stately in its grand outlines and convergence to a central plan or idea, but he produced instead a literary structure of loosely strung parts, some of exaggerated power and beauty, and some of diminutive dimension, the whole presenting an inharmonious effect. The beauty of some parts does not atone for the ugliness of others.

It is upon Beddoes's lyrics that his claim to fame rests; it is in these that he displays most gift for melody, harmony, and technical skill. But for the inevitable sinister note that mars the lyrical feeling, these lyrics could be called almost the consummate art of verse-making. What could be more sweet and exquisite than the love-song in "Torrismond?"

How many times do I lose thee, dear?
 Tell me how many thoughts there be
 In the atmosphere
 Of a new-fall'n year,
 Whose white and sable hours appear
 The latest flake of Eternity;
 So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love again?
 Tell me how many beads there are
 In a silver chain
 Of evening rain
 Unraveled from the trembling main,
 And threading the eye of a yellow star;
 So many times do I love again.

"A Dirge" is profound in its beauty and melancholy:

To-day is a thought, a fear is to-morrow,
 And yesterday is our sin and sorrow;
 And life is a death,
 Where the body's the tomb,

And the pale, sweet breath
Is buried alive in its hideous gloom.
Then waste no tear,
For we are the dead; the living are here
In the stealing earth, and the heavy bier.
Death lives but an instant, and is but a sign,
And his son is unnamed Immortality,
Whose being is time. Dear ghost, so to die
Is to live—and life is a worthless lie.
Then we weep for ourselves, and wish thee good-by.

A second "Dirge" is very artistic:

To her couch of evening rest,
'Neath the sun's divinest west,
Bear we, in the silent car,
This consumed incense star,
This dear maid whose life is shed,
And whose sweets are sweetly dead.

Mr. Gosse has called "Dream Pedlary" the most exquisite of Beddoes's lyrics. While it is very charming, it is not free from the sinister touch in which Beddoes so delights. The first three stanzas are the most beautiful:

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell,
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rung the bell,
What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy my woes to still,
Until I die.
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

But there were dreams to sell.
Ill didst thou buy;
Life is a dream, they tell,
Waking, to die.

Dreaming a dream to prize,
 Is wishing ghosts to rise;
 And, if I had the spell
 To call the buried well,
 Which one would I?

In a letter written from Göttingen in 1836, Beddoes enclosed a poem, from which the following extract has been taken. It is one of the very few places where Beddoes strikes a high ethical note:

Take thy example from the sunny lark,
 Throw off the mantle which conceals the soul,
 The many-cited world, and seek thy goal
 Straight as a star beam falls. Creep not nor climb
 As they who plan their topmost of sublime
 On some peak of this planet pitifully.
 Dart eaglewise with open wings, and fly
 Until you meet the gods. Thus counsel I.
 The men who can, but tremble to be great—
 Cursed be the fool who taught to hesitate,
 And to regret; time lost most bitterly.

The "Ballad of Human Life," three stanzas representing the three stages of life, boy and girl, lad and lass, man and wife, is very human. There are a number of other lyrics, such as "The Swallow Leaves Her Nest," "If Thou Wilt Ease Thine Heart," "Love in Idleness," "Song by Siegfried," and "Aho, Aho, Love's Horn Doth Blow," especially the first two, that are excellent and deserve to be better known. While it must be acknowledged that there is a monotony about them, showing that as a lyrist Beddoes was of a high order, but not of wide range, yet the most prejudiced critic could not but conclude that the "Love Song" from *Torrismond*, "Dream Pedlary," and "The Swallow Leaves Her Nest" are exquisite, and rank among the best of their kind in the language.

In striking contrast to these poems, there is a second class which Mr. Gosse has classified as the poems of "Grisly Humour." "Song of the Stygian Naiades," "Lord Alcohol," "Adam, the Carrion Crow," "Song of Isbrand," from "Death's Jest Book," "Harpagus' Ballad," and the "Dance of Death" are instances which vie with each other in grotesque and repulsive fancy.

SONG.

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying? O, no;
It's only two devils that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghost's moonshine.

Ho! Eve, my gray carrion wife,
When we have supped on king's marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is Queen Cleopatra's skull,
'Tis cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full;
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
Is that the wind dying? O, no;
It's only two devils that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghost's moonshine.

They are too gruesome for enjoyment, but are rather to be wondered at as objects in a museum, and to be preserved for their variety of species rather than on account of their literary excellence.

"The Boding Dreams" and "From the German" show the effect of German mysticism and metaphysics. The "Romance of the Lily" and "The Ghost's Moonshine," belong to the same category, and, judging from their tone, were probably written after Beddoes went to Germany. They fairly repel one with their ghastliness and uncanniness of conception.

In addition to his gift as a lyricist, Beddoes shows great facility as a prose writer in his letters, which were collected and published by Mr. Gosse in 1894. Mr. Swinburne has said that Beddoes's "noble instinct for poetry was demonstrated in his letters more than in his poetry, and that his brilliant correspondence on poetical questions gives me a higher view of his fine and vigorous intelligence than any

other section of his literary remains." The letters cover a period from 1824 to 1849, and are in the main written to Mr. Kelsall and Mr. Proctor. They exhibit the reserve which always characterized Beddoes, and give little insight into his personality or the details of his life on the Continent, but they are replete with interesting literary criticisms and original ideas on various subjects. While it cannot be said that Beddoes was always correct in his literary criticisms—he attacked Goethe most unmercifully—yet as a usual thing he showed great discrimination. His estimate of Shelley's great genius, expressed in one of his letters written at the time of Shelley's death, was long before a general recognition came.

What would he not have done, if ten years more, that will be wasted upon the lives of unprofitable knaves and fools, had been given to him? Was it that more of the beautiful and good that Nature could spare to him was incarnate in him, and that it was necessary to resume it for distribution through the external and internal worlds? How many springs will blossom with his thoughts—how many fair and glorious creations be born of his extinction?

Beddoes esteemed Shelley and Keats most of all of his contemporaries, and his admiration for Shakespeare falls little short of worship. Of Shakespeare he says:

He was an incarnation of Nature; and you might just as well attempt to remodel the reasons and the laws of life and death as to alter "one jot or tittle" of his eternal strength. "A star," you call him. If he was a star, all the other stage scribblers can hardly be called a constellation of brass buttons. I say he was a universe, and all material existence, with its excellencies and its defects, was reflected in shadowy thought upon the crystal waters of his imagination, ever glorified as they were by the sleepless sun of his golden intellect. And this imaginary universe had its seasons and changes, its harmonies and its discords, as well as the dirty reality.

The letters contain many passages of this character, bits of gossip, much sarcastic humor, and many sallies of wit; all perfectly free from the melancholy and cynicism of his poetry. It would be difficult to find more racy, living expression of thought, with deep appreciation of all things beautiful in literature and art, than in these letters. The letter to Mr. Proctor from Milan, June 8, 1824, is one of the best in the

collection, and the description that it contains of the firefly is poetry in prose:

And what else have I seen? A beautiful and far-famed insect—do not mistake. I mean neither the emperor nor the king of Sardinia, but a much finer specimen—the firefly. Their bright light is evanescent and alternates with the darkness, as if the swift wheeling of the earth struck fire out of the black atmosphere; as if the winds were being set upon this planetary grindstone and gave out such momentary sparks from their edges. Their silence is more striking than their flashes, for sudden phenomena are almost invariably attended with some noise; but these little jewels dart along in the dark as softly as butterflies. For their light, it is not nearly so beautiful and poetical as our still companions of the dew—the glow worm and the drop of moonlight.

The volume contains many other passages of equal beauty and interest.

Beddoes had vast power of conception and mastery of rhythm, combined with “a delicate fancy and a strange choiceness of phrase,” but he lacked universal sympathy and the power to express the vital emotions. “*The Bride’s Tragedy*,” one of his earliest productions, shows more knowledge of human nature than any of his succeeding dramas, which, probably on account of his solitary life, have less and less sympathy with humanity. His writings were of the head and not the heart; he studied literature, not life.

Beddoes has been called a “belated Elizabethan, who strayed into the nineteenth century.” He had little in common with his contemporaries, but belongs rather to the school that was founded by Kyd, sustained by Marlowe, perfected in Shakespeare’s “*Hamlet*,” and illustrated in its decadence by Marston, Webster, and Tourneur. It was revived for only a last gasp by Beddoes. The influence of Shakespeare, Webster, and Tourneur is felt in his works, and, notwithstanding his strong originality of conception, there is little that does not show the direct influence of some one of the Elizabethans. Beddoes resembles Tourneur and Webster in style, but, while they reek with moral filth, Beddoes is always chaste and distinguished. A judgment expressed in the article in the ninth edition of the “*Encyclopædia Britannica*,” is interesting: “Beddoes borrowed nothing either from his Elizabethan precursors or the chief objects of his

admiration among his contemporaries, Keats and Shelley." While Beddoes was in no sense a plagiarist, his debt to the writers must be acknowledged.

It is to the Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century that Beddoes is most closely allied. His affectation of the sinister and melancholy, his return to the mediæval, as in "Death's Jest Book," his admiration for the Elizabethans, and particularly his employment of Gothic and supernatural machinery, are but the growth and outcome against eighteenth century classicism. Beddoes represents the fusion of the English and the German revolt against conventionality; as a natural consequence the pendulum of Beddoes's genius swung to the other extreme of utter improbability. In this respect he may be classed with Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, the chief exponents of Gothic romance. Moreover, there are curiously interesting resemblances between Beddoes and that group of eighteenth century poets known as the Graveyard School. The implements of verse used by this school, such as tomb, ravens, owls, skeletons, and ghosts, are found in Beddoes's verse, plus murders, suicides, grinning ghosts, carrion crows, charnel houses, prisons, and biers. Gray could not write of Eton boys, happy at play, without thinking

How all around them wait
For monsters of human fate
And black Misfortune's baleful train.

Beddoes, with even greater pessimism, sees Death everywhere:

Sleeping, or feigning sleep, well done of her; 'tis trying on a garb
Which she must wear, sooner or late, long: 'tis but a warmer, lighter death.

Both are amorous of misfortune, death, and the tomb.

Beddoes's genius is undeniable, but it is limited in scope. Had he developed naturally from the time of the writing of "The Bride's Tragedy," he would have won a great literary fame; but his genius was stunted by his scientific studies and by the disuse of his own language. Browning once said of him: "If I were a professor of poetry, my first lecture at the university would be on 'Beddoes, a forgotten Oxford poet.' "

Notwithstanding such generous praise, time has demonstrated that Beddoes belongs, not to the highways, but to the byways of literature, which are none the less original and exquisite in certain parts because of their remoteness, but trod only by lovers of the rare.

One is reminded by Mrs. Andrew Crosse of a striking coincidence in the lives of Coleridge and Beddoes; both poets were influenced by German thought, and the poetical genius of each was blunted by German metaphysics.

Beddoes was so dissatisfied with life that he was ever seeking to solve the impenetrable mystery of life and death; it may even be said that Death is the eternal note in his song. The 20th of April, 1827, he writes from Göttingen that "I am already so thoroughly convinced of the absurdity and unsatisfactory nature of human life that I search with avidity for every shadow of a proof or probability of an after existence, both in the material and immaterial nature of man, . . . for which Nature appears to have pointed one solution—Death." Mr. Gosse says that "Beddoes dedicates himself to the service of Death, not with a brooding sense of the terror and shame of mortality, but from a love of the picturesque pageantry of it, the majesty and somber beauty, the swift theatrical transitions, the combined elegance and horror that wait upon the sudden decease of monarchs."

Beddoes seems never to have contemplated death with spiritual hope. At times he views death with dread, with scorn, or with laughter; again with admiration of its power and malignity; but rarely with hope, and then it is the tolerant hope of the Stoic, never with the belief that death is the spiritual consummation of life.

Lament! I'd have thee do it;
The heaviest raining is the briefest shower.
Death is the one condition of our life;
To murmur were unjust; our buried sire
Yielded their seats to us, and we shall give
Our elbow-room of sunshine to our sons.
From first to last the traffic must go on,
Still birth for death. Shall we remonstrate then?
Millions have died that we might breathe this day;
The first of all might murmur, but not we.
Grief is unmanly too.

Again and again he says that "Life is a dream, and death is the waking," but he never reasons beyond this point. The material seems ever to dominate the spiritual.

Despite a passion for energy and action, Beddoes's life shows the same defect seen in his schooldays. After becoming acquainted with a subject, he soon tired of it, and abandoned further effort in that direction before attaining perfection, ever following a will-o'-the-wisp which flitted from one object of learning to another. His conduct of life lacked sustained effort just as his dramas lacked sustained dramatic action and organic unity. There is no master motive in his life, as there is no master motive in his dramas, and the same haziness which surrounds his own purposes obscures the motions of his characters. This is the more deplorable, since Beddoes possessed unusual and strikingly original qualities of mind—gifts which should have made him a great poet instead of a minor nineteenth century lyricist.

BARNETTE MILLER.